



County of Los Angeles Beach Commission

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March 24, 2005

Honorable Board of Supervisors
383 Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration
500 West Temple Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Dear Supervisors:

OPPOSITION TO AREAS FOR DOGS ON COUNTY OPERATED BEACHES

The County of Los Angeles Beach Commission at its meeting of March 23, 2005 took a formal position to oppose the establishment of on or off-leash areas for dogs on County operated beaches, for reasons detailed below. In our capacity as your advisor on beach-related issues, our Commission recommends that your Board officially oppose all efforts to establish on or off-leash areas for dogs on the beach. We understand that there is currently specific legislation pending that would allow such an area on one of the State beaches the County operates and, thus, time is of the essence. This Commission is convinced that your Board should oppose all efforts now or in the future to establish such dog areas on any of the beaches the County operates.

This County and every beach city, along with State Parks with respect to beaches in Los Angeles County, have ordinances, regulations, or policies prohibiting and/or restricting dogs on their respective beaches. The City of Long Beach currently has a small beach area designated as a dog zone.

There are basic health, environmental and safety concerns that underlie these restrictions and/or prohibitions, such as: (1) the presence of animal fecal waste and urine in sandy and/or other areas that families, children and the general public walk through, lie down on or play in; (2) the harmful effects of increased bacterial pollution in and around the coastline; (3) disturbance of the native ecosystem and endangered native flora and fauna; and (4) the inability to predict or control animal behavior (for example, fighting with other dogs, barking at or biting the public, and interfering with users of the beach bike path).

<i>Walt Dougher, Chair</i>	<i>Thomas Barnes</i>	<i>Charles Hayes</i>	<i>Don Rohrer</i>	<i>Marilyn White</i>
<i>Rosi Dagit</i>	<i>Clare Bronowski</i>	<i>Jeffrey Jennings</i>	<i>Hal Ross</i>	
<i>Vice-Chair</i>	<i>Ronald Chatman</i>	<i>Catherine Shea McCurdy</i>	<i>Andrew Stern</i>	
	<i>Gary R. Dimkich</i>	<i>Charles Milam</i>	<i>Carole Stevens</i>	
	<i>Don Doyle</i>	<i>Phil Pennington</i>		
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By themselves, these concerns are enough to keep non-dog owners away from our beaches, and especially families that fear for their children's safety or even about putting down a blanket on the sand. In addition, there are budgetary concerns associated with the costs of establishing and maintaining such areas. For instance, these costs would involve providing bags (with dispensers) to remove waste, maintaining special signage to designate the area and assigning additional staff (law enforcement, lifeguards, animal control and other County staff) to explain and enforce the regulations for the areas. There are also increased costs connected with the need to sanitize the beach and remove waste daily.

Another and potentially very large cost would result from the County being held liable for incidents involving dogs. It must be anticipated that there will be dog bites, as well as other injuries to beach goers, dog owners, other dogs and bicyclists on our heavily used beaches and the highly trafficked beach bike trail. This is especially so when projecting the high use that such areas would incur on our popular coastline and from our heavily populated County.

It is estimated that one very popular beach in San Diego for dogs called Ocean Beach is used at peak times by up to 10,000 dogs every week. We believe that such numbers would easily be exceeded on Los Angeles County beaches, because they are immediately adjacent to highly populated, urban areas. The beaches Los Angeles County operates are urban-area beaches visited annually by an estimated 55 million people. When considering all the objections to on or off-leash dogs on the beach, as well as the high level of beach use by our beach goers, the beaches operated by Los Angeles County are simply a bad choice for this type of activity.

Accordingly, the Beach Commission has endorsed the position that dogs should not be allowed on beaches operated by Los Angeles County and recommends that your Board similarly adopt a strong stance against dogs on the beach.

Very truly yours,

Walt Dougher, Chairman

WD:kgs